

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 SS-20 RSC-01 PA-04

PRS-01 USIA-15 L-03 H-03 AID-20 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11

FRB-02 INR-10 NSAE-00 TRSE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12 CIEP-02

LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 AGR-20 DRC-01 /173 W

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R 191215Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 155

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 2627

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ECON, CE

SUBJ: FOOD SHORTAGES PUT US IN AWKWARD POSITION

REF: COLOMBO 2500

1. SEPTTEL REPORTS ON DOMESTIC REPERCUSSIONS OF FOOD
AUSTERITY MEASURES TAKEN BY GSL. EMPHASIS ON FOOD SUPPLIES FROM ABRO
AD
IN DOMESTIC DEBATE ON FOOD POLICY HAS PUT US
IN INCREASINGLY UNFAVORABLE POSITION DUE OUR INABILITY
SO FAR TO PROVIDE PL 480 WHEAT FLOUR WHILE OTHERS
MEETING THEIR AID COMMITMENTS.

2. OPPOSITION CONTINUES POUND AWAY AT CLAIM THAT
FAILURE OF GSL'S FOREIGN POLICY AND NOT LACK OF
WORLDWIDE SUPPLIES IS CAUSE OF SRI LANKA'S FOOD
SHORTAGES. OPPOSITION ARGUMENT STRONGLY REINFORCED
BY CONSTANT REFERENCE IN PRESS TO INTERNATIONAL
FOOD SALES WITH HEADLINES OF "CANADA SELLS (WHEAT)
TO CHINA", "GERMAN WHEAT FOR INDONESIA", "CHINA
SELLS RICE TO JAPAN", REPORTS ON SOVIET WHEAT LOAN
TO INDIA, RECEIPTS BY SRI LANKA OF WHEAT FLOUR
FROM FOOD AID CONVENTION DONORS AUSTRALIA, CANADA, WEST GERMANY
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AND EEC, AND REPEATED REFERENCES BY OPPOSITION TO US'S

400 MILLION BUSHEL WHEAT RESERVES. OPPOSITION ASKS
IF US HAS THIS AMOUNT OF WHEAT AND RUSSIA CAN OFFER
TWO MILLION TONS TO INDIA, WHY CANT GSL OBTAIN MERE
200,000 TONS WHEAT FLOUR NEEDED TO FEED CEYLONSE
PEOPLE.

3. GOVT IS STICKING TO ITS STORY THAT RICE
UNAVAILABLE IN INTERNATIONAL MARKETS, GSL CANNOT
AFFORD MORE WHEAT FLOUR DUE HIGH WORLD MARKET
PRICE AND ACCUSES OPPOSITION OF ATTEMPTING TO SABOTAGE
FOOD DRIVE. PRIME MINISTER IN OCT 8 "FOOD WAR"
SPEECH SAID "EVEN THE PRESIDENT OF AMERICA, MR NIXON,
HAD ALSO DECLINED TO GIVE US ASSURANCE FOR THE
SUPPLY OF WHEAT FLOUR".

4. GSL PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF UNDERSTANDING OF USG
DIFFICULTY IN PROVIDING PL 480 ASSISTANCE MAY BE
WEARING THIN AS OPPOSITION ATTACKS ON GSL FOOD POLICY
CONT
MUE AND OTHER DONORS COME THROUGH WITH ALL OR EVEN
ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE PROMISED AT LAST AID GROUP MEETING.
FOR EXAMPLE, PRESS HAS GIVEN PROMINENT FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE TO
OCT 19 SIGNING OF \$12 MILLION INHLNTIED COMMODITY LOANS
BY FRG AND PRIME MINISTER HAS STATED PUBLICLY THAT 60,000 TONS
OF WHEAT FLOUR HAVE BEEN RECEIVED AS GIFTS. ABOVE
FACTORS, PLUS PRESS REPORTS OF BUMPER GRAIN HARVESTS IN US
ARE MAKING US POSITION HERE UNCOMFORTABLY AWKWARD BOTH IN REGARD
OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GSL AND OTHER AID GROUP DONORS.

5. WE WILL SHORTLY BE SENDING ADDITIONAL POLICY RECOMMENDA-
TIONS REGARDING US RESPONSE TO OUR INCREASINGLY UNTENABLE
POSITION CAUSED BY OUR INABILITY DELIVER ON PL 480 PLEDGE.
VAN HOLLEN

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